

# THOMAS REID OF IDENTITY

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# IDENTITY

- Thomas Reid first states that “man’s identity goes as far back as his memory.”
  - In order to have memory, you have to had existed
  - If there is no existence, then there would be no memory

# IDENTITY

- Once a man remembers the moment that his existence began, he has personal identity.
- The moment he stops existing is the same moment he loses his personal identity
- Therefore personal identity must be continuous.
- It cannot start and stop at multiple times

# IDENTITY

- Reid then characterizes identity as relations to things that exist at one time, to things that are known to have existed
- It is common sense for a man to tell if his identity is the same or different at one time or another.
- Since identity can only be characterized by relations to other things, Reid admits that he has no exact definition of identity
- He only gives characteristics to explain personal identity

# CONTINENCE

- Reid then proceeds to say that
  - “ Identity supposes an uninterrupted continuance of existence. (pg.344)”
- Cannot exist after having to cease to exist
- Cannot have existed before having existence

# CONTINENCE

- Since identity is continuous, it cannot be applied to pains, emotions and pleasures
- Any type of operations of the mind
- The pain we feel one day is not the same pain we feel another day
- The pain we feel on both days are similar, but they are not exactly the same

# IDENTITY

- Reid then says that identity is continuous and cannot be divided into parts.
- Ex: if a man loses all of his wealth and fortune, he is still the same man

# MYSELF

- Personal identity implies the continuous existence of an indivisible thing.
- This thing is something that he calls “myself”

# PERMANENCE

- Within himself there are thoughts and actions
- But he cannot define his identity based on these thoughts and actions, because they are constantly changing
- The self is permanent

# HOW DO WE KNOW?

- We know of the permanent self through remembrance
- EX: If I remember doing something, I have to have existed in order to have done it

# QUESTION

- Did you have a personal identity when you were born, even though you don't remember it?
- Yes, there are other types of evidence proving identity
- You had to have existed once you were born and you know you were born because you are here now

# JUDGING OTHERS

- Judging other identities are different from your own
- Judging your own personal identity there is more certainty
- Judging objects is purely based on similarity
- Two objects are alike when shown at the same time but they are not the same
- If the objects were shown at separate times, we call them the same because of their similarity.

# HORSE EXAMPLE

- If a man finds a thief in possession of his horse
- The man is making this judgment that is his horse solely based on similarity.

# SELF VS OTHERS

- Evidence of identity from self is different from that of others
- Your personal identity is grounded on memory and undoubted certainty
- Other identities are grounded on similarity, which leaves room for doubt

# EVIDENCE

- Reid ends his piece saying that our bodies are constantly changing, and therefore our personal identity cannot be based on our bodies.

# CONCLUSION

- Overall, Reid characterizes personal identity as something that contains an continuous existence of an indivisible thing
- This he call the “self”
- Personal identity cannot consist of things that are constantly changing like emotions or our bodies.